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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002522

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: GAZA CITY'S MAYOR/CITY COUNCIL SUSPEND OPERATIONS  
TO PROTEST HAMAS INTERFERENCE

REF: A. JERUSALEM 1794  
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 1524

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Gaza City Mayor Majid Abu Ramadan (Independent) told PolOff by phone December 7 that he and the city council have suspended operations to protest illegal Hamas interference in municipal operations and personnel decisions. He said that, if not reversed, Hamas' appointment of a Director-General with new powers will reduce him and the city council members to figureheads and give the former Hamas Local Government Minister effective control over all important municipal decisions. End summary.

Hamas Appoints New City Director,  
Illegally Increases His Powers  
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[1](#)2. (C) Gaza City Mayor Majid Abu Ramadan (Independent) told PolOff by phone December 7 that he and the city council suspended operations effective December 5 to protest Hamas' "illegal appointment of a new Municipal Director General (DG) and other steps designed to bypass and replace the city's legal leadership." Former Minister of Local Government (MoLG) Muhammad al-Barghuthi (Hamas), claiming to be MoLG under former Hamas PM Ismayil Haniyah, issued decrees promoting Abu Ramadan's current DG Akram Hillis and naming him "Counselor to the Mayor." He then appointed Imad Siyam, a Hamas computer technician with no relevant experience, as the new DG, and gave him powers that exceed those of the Mayor and city council. According to Abu Ramadan, al-Barghuthi also issued a decree to Gaza's banks replacing Abu Ramadan's signature authority for Municipal accounts with that of Siyam.

[1](#)3. (C) Abu Ramadan told PolOff that these steps contradict Article 18 of the PA's Law Number 1 (1997) on public administration, which gives the city council sole authority to hire and fire all municipal employees. He said he will not tolerate Hamas' changes, which would require city employees to deal with him only through the Hamas DG, since they would make him and the city council figureheads without real authority. "We will not serve as front men to collect international aid for a de facto Hamas government, and will not be window dressing so Hamas can claim to be respecting Presidential decrees," he said.

Mayor to Discuss Situation  
with PA Leadership Soon  
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[1](#)4. (C) Abu Ramadan said he will consider several courses of action, including asking the international community to stop aid to the municipality, if Hamas does not stop interfering in Gaza City's municipal operations, but he will not do so

until he discusses the matter with President Abbas and PM Fayyad next week. He said the city council will not rescind its suspension of operations until the Hamas DG is removed and the status quo ante is restored.

Comment

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15. (C) Hamas has apparently decided to undermine Gaza City's municipal leadership without paying the political cost associated with firing the Mayor and city council outright. Until now, the Municipality operated with some independence despite Hamas actions to undermine Abu Ramadan's control of local services (reftels). Only a minority of Gaza's municipalities have elected Hamas mayors, but this new power play indicates that Hamas may intend to consolidate power over all local authorities in the Gaza Strip and will violate PA law in pursuit of this goal.

WALLES